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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 004290

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#) [XL](#)

SUBJECT: FALLUJANS OVERWHELMINGLY REJECT CONSTITUTION IN
LARGE TURNOUT; SIGNAL CONTINUED MOBILIZATION

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROBERT FORD, REASONS 1.4
(B) AND (D).

1. (C) SUMMARY: Fallujah and neighboring area residents voted in large numbers during the October 15 referendum. They overwhelmingly rejected the constitution, according to initial reports from Fallujah-based IECI staff. The large turnout in Iraq's "city of mosques", alongside low turnout in the rest of Al-Anbar, guarantees that the province will be placed in the reject column. Ra'ad Aboud, IECI director of operations for Anbar, estimated October 16 that approximately 170,000 Fallujah-area residents participated in the constitutional referendum, although IECI headquarters has yet to release final figures. Most Fallujans who registered went to the polls. The expected breakdown will be over 90 percent voting against. There were no major security incidents at the city's 34 polling sites; the IECI-approved tribal security plan, with police support and extensive U.S. Marine oversight and involvement, worked. Fallujah leaders told Poloff and Marine FAO referendum day that the city would remain mobilized for the December election. END SUMMARY.

FALLUJANS VOTE "NO" IN DROVES

2. (C) Fallujah's leaders had long predicted high turnout. They mobilized the local Sunni-Arab vote over many months. City council members, Imams and tribal leaders played particularly pro-active roles. Residents largely followed the clerics' guidance to participate, while heeding informal advice that the draft would lead to a division of Iraq. Most Fallujans said they had not seen or read the draft prior to the vote.

3. (C) Fallujah-based IECI operations director, Ra'ad Aboud, provided Fallujah Poloff with initial turnout numbers on the evening of October 15 and more solid returns throughout October 16. When the IECI team had finished their first review, they determined that the city voters overwhelmingly rejected the draft. At some polling sites, 100 percent voted "no" -- with only a few scattered "yes" votes in other sites. Examples of this dramatically lop-sided ratio include preliminary stats at three sites (no vs. yes votes): 3,059 to 37; 2,119 to 20; and, 339 unanimous negative votes at one location. IECI's Ra'ad Aboud, himself a Sunni-Arab from Ramadi, remarked wryly that the "yes" votes reflected the number of "educated voters" in Fallujah. (Comment: this is the kind of lop-sided turnout that is drawing IECI/Baghdad attention. Anbar results could well figure among those re-checked by the IECI. End Comment.)

4. (C) While city imams did not formally advocate a negative vote from pulpits, they pursued -- rather effectively based on the tentative results -- a quiet "vote no" approach in mosque corridors. Clerics' whispers echoed the negative aspects of the draft, with "federalism equals division" as the most prominent mantra. Tribal leaders, conversely, largely maintained their neutral stance.

R-DAY ATMOSPHERICS; IECI PERFORMANCE;
TRIBAL SECURITY PLAN A SUCCESS

5. (C) ATMOSPHERICS: High turnout in the city was spread over 34 sites. Each neighborhood had its own polling location (schools often), so residents were able to vote at their leisure. Fallujah Poloff visited two locations on referendum day, both schools. Steady voting occurred at each location, with children gathered in large numbers at one. The mood was calm and there was a degree of buzz in the air, as neighborhoods took to the streets to participate in the referendum.

6. (C) IECI PERFORMANCE: IECI staff had their problems, but also enjoyed baseline success. U.S. Marine logistical assistance -- formally requested by IECI -- proved invaluable, particularly as last-minute issues arose regarding ballot transportation, etc. The IECI's biggest disconnect stemmed from confusion over whether residents could vote at any city site, or only the one in which their registration record was held (based on the PDS/food ration

system). IECI Chairman Izadin had told Fallujah leaders that voting would not be restricted to certain locations; however, on R Day, residents were told the opposite. Fortunately, IECI staff directed voters to the right sites, helping to alleviate the problem. IECI also failed to plan in advance for ISF voting -- a sizable group in Fallujah. The situation was resolved only late in the day when Iraqi Army units were finally given IECI go-ahead to vote.

17. (C) TRIBAL SECURITY PLAN: The tribal security plan, supplemented by local police, worked; there were no major security incidents. City police performed particularly well; police searched Poloff at both locations visited. Fallujans will seek to repeat this arrangement in the December election, and consideration will likely be given to expanding this model elsewhere in the province. Future and wider success will depend on key parameters, to include an adequate CF presence and related coalition commanders' assessments, and an ISF role (led by police) with sufficient training and equipment.

18. (C) COMMENT: One Anbar city's results -- Fallujah's overwhelming "no" vote -- decisively moved the province into the reject column. Zarqawi's and associated extremists' intimidation message failed, in the very city that only a year ago AMZ treated as a safe haven. Fallujah's high turnout will undoubtedly be noticed in other Anbar communities, including in provincial capital Ramadi. Many Anbaris will understandably begin to ask whether they want Fallujah to be the vast area's singularly dominant political voice. Most arguably will not. That will be a healthy, and overdue, internal Sunni-Arab dialogue. Fallujah's October 15 surge to polling sites might even hasten other Sunni-Arab leaders to move more aggressively against extremist intimidation and toward similar mobilization. Fallujah, for now, has impressively laid claim to implicit political leadership at the grass-roots level. The city's mobilized voting bloc will be a tempting target in the December election, whoever seeks to win it. Fallujah leaders already predict even higher turnout then, flowing from referendum day momentum. Continued Sunni-Arab political engagement -- not the overwhelming and predictable "no" vote -- stands as the most important referendum day headline in one of Iraq's most well known and volatile cities. END COMMENT.
Khalilzad